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Chairman: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 (continued)

General debate (continued)

First reading (continued)

Part VI. Human rights and humanitarian affairs (continued)

Part VII. Public information

Part VIII. Common support services

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 (continued) (A/48/6, A/48/7, A/48/16 (Parts I and II) and A/48/32/Rev.1/Add.1; A/C.5/48/9 and Corr.1 and Add.1, A/C.5/48/26 and A/C.5/48/51)

General debate (continued)

1. Mr. NAGY (Hungary) said that the Hungarian delegation continued to support the Secretary-General's reforms, for no effort should be spared to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations. However, the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 (A/48/6) showed how good intentions could produce mixed results. Hungary concurred with the general observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) but had difficulty with specific ACABQ recommendations and proposals of the Secretary-General.

2. In section 9 (Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis) the Hungarian delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals on micro-economic activities, which should help the countries in transition in Eastern Europe. Unlike the Advisory Committee, therefore, it supported the provision of the necessary human resources.

3. Under section 21 on human rights, measures commensurate with the increasing workload of the Centre for Human Rights must be taken. The proposed increase in resources was a recognition of the high priority of the Centre's activities. No reduction would be acceptable to the Hungarian delegation.

4. Hungary had agreed reluctantly to the relocation of substantive units, on the understanding that all United Nations centres would receive equal treatment. However, the budget proposals contained nothing to compensate for the shift of activities from the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) despite the request made in resolution 47/212 B. The Advisory Committee was right that upward reclassification of posts should not be used to promote staff, but that did not mean that all reclassification should be blocked; where the duties of a post had increased, it should be upgraded.

5. Mr. DIMOV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation commended the efforts of the Secretary-General to adapt the organizational structure to the challenges of the new world environment and the attention given to the priority areas of peace-keeping, humanitarian assistance and social and economic development. It shared the serious concerns which others had expressed about the programme budget planning procedure. The involvement of every Member State in the planning of the programme budget would increase their sense of responsibility for meeting their financial obligations.

6. His delegation welcomed the simplification of the budget format, and shared the opinion of ACABQ that programmes, subprogrammes and functions of many departments and units, especially those established under the restructuring, could be greatly streamlined in order to eliminate duplication. The methodology used in the preparation of budget estimates should ensure efficiency,

(Mr. Dimov, Bulgaria)

transparency and effective utilization of resources, in the absence of additional financing for new activities. It agreed that some reductions in the programme budget could be introduced. With regard to requested increases in the number of high-level posts, his delegation believed that the organizational structure should not become top-heavy. It agreed with the views expressed on the recruitment freeze and the need to observe the principle of equitable geographical distribution, particularly with regard to high-level posts.

7. His delegation attached special importance to the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia. The Secretariat unit servicing that Committee should be reinforced in order to accelerate the processing of applications, in line with the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) for increases in staff and resources allocated to the servicing of the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council. His delegation also supported efforts to secure new resources for training.

First reading (continued)

Part VI. Human rights and humanitarian affairs (continued)

8. Mr. MADDENS (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the great importance of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be reflected in the financial and human resources allocated to it. The European Union therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals, which struck a balance between the coordination of humanitarian assistance and direct intervention as a means of providing it. It was also logical for the Secretary-General to continue to consider funding a larger part of the Department's work from the regular budget. While the overall efficiency of the Department should be improved, priority must be given to operational functions. The Department's importance had been underestimated, and the Secretary-General should submit new budgetary proposals for section 23 together with his proposals for redeployment.

9. Mr. WOLFFHECHEL (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries on section 23, said that they attached great importance to the Department's coordination of the humanitarian emergency assistance provided by the international community. In view of the increase in its work, the funds and staff allocated to the Department should be substantially augmented, and the budgetary increase proposed by the Secretary-General represented a minimum. The Nordic countries welcomed the support of CPC for the strengthening of the Department; although they shared the concern of ACABQ that the allocated resources should be used efficiently, they could not subscribe to any cuts in the proposed budget.

10. As the Advisory Committee had pointed out, the Secretary-General's proposal that a larger part of the Department's core functions should be financed from the regular budget was a policy question for the General Assembly to decide. The Nordic countries supported the Secretary-General's position and were glad that the principle had been reflected to some extent in the budget proposals.

(Mr. Wolffhechel, Denmark)

They also supported his view that the United Nations must have the means to translate humanitarian ideals into tangible assistance and were willing to pay their share of the costs.

11. Ms. SAEKI (Japan) said that the Japanese delegation supported the strengthening of the Centre for Human Rights and requested the Secretariat to provide more background information about the proposals.

12. With regard to section 22A (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) Japan supported the proposal that the posts of chiefs of mission in the least developed countries should be recognized as a proper charge to the regular budget. It supported the strengthening of the coordinating function of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs described in section 23 and agreed that the Secretary-General should keep under review the possibility of funding more core functions from the regular budget. That did not affect Japan's position that humanitarian field operations should be implemented by the relevant organizations. The administrative costs of the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and the secretariat costs of preparing for the World Conference should be funded from the regular budget, but Decade-related projects continue to be financed by voluntary contributions.

13. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that the ACABQ recommendations on part VI were seriously wrong. There was no technical ground for the post cuts proposed in sections 21, 22A and 23. The Advisory Committee must examine part VI solely on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General and the recommendations of CPC.

14. It had made no recommendation under section 21 for the Centre for Human Rights; the Centre was underfunded, and the General Assembly must at least endorse the Secretary-General's proposals. The resources concerned were already in place, and CPC had agreed that they were needed. Furthermore, the Committee would have to act on the statement of programme budget implications concerning the mandates stemming from the World Conference on Human Rights.

15. Under section 22 the Advisory Committee had erred in rejecting the proposal to shift the posts of heads of mission in the least developed countries to the regular budget. Since there had been a twofold real increase in expenditure by UNHCR since 1989, the proposed new posts should be included in the regular budget. The same argument applied to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. CPC had concluded that the allocated resources were the minimum required. The posts proposed by ACABQ for deletion had been authorized for the biennium 1992-1993, and any cuts would have adverse consequences for the Department.

16. Mrs. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that in its budget proposals the Secretariat had disregarded the General Assembly's decision on priorities contained in resolution 45/253. The Cuban delegation endorsed the comments by other delegations on the question of priorities; the proposals for part VI compared unfavourably with those made for the sections on economic and social development. They should be assessed not in terms of absolute volume of resources but of the percentage of the budget which they represented.

(Mrs. Goicochea, Cuba)

Section 21, in particular, had also been unfairly treated in the previous budget.

17. The Advisory Committee had not made a recommendation on section 21 because it had not received the additional information requested from the Secretariat concerning the redeployment, conversion and creation of posts. That information was essential for the discussion of the question in the informal negotiations, and Cuba would be unable to approve any appropriations for new posts without it.

18. Some of the proposals, in section 21.3 for example, appeared to establish a linkage between economic and social development and human rights. Since it would be wrong for any kind of conditionality to be created, the Secretariat must remove all doubt concerning its treatment of the matter. The Secretariat also seemed to be proposing to change the structure of the Centre for Human Rights according to its own perception of the Centre's function. However, any changes must be consistent with the decisions taken by Member States, and Cuba could not support any activities based only on the Secretariat's perception.

19. The proposals contained in section 21.8 for the distribution of resources among the subprogrammes were selective and did not give sufficient importance to certain subprogrammes, in particular subprogramme 2. The Secretariat had not taken into account the concern stated by many delegations in CPC during its evaluation of the human rights programme. It should submit alternative proposals for consideration in the informal negotiations. Furthermore, very few resources were allocated to the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the appropriation for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights showed negative growth. The Secretariat did not seem to be taking fully into account the universal and interrelated nature of all human rights. The failure to mention in section 21.9 the Working Group on the Right to Development was surely an oversight.

20. It was regrettable that section 21.20 made no mention of the consent or request of the State concerned in connection with fact-finding missions. With regard to the activities described in section 21.22, the Cuban delegation did not understand the reference in paragraph 1 (b) (ii) to the handling of communications that fell outside existing procedures.

21. There were references in section 21 and other sections to links with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Cuba hoped that the draft resolution on the item would place a specific limit on NGO activities.

22. Cuba fully supported subprogramme 2 on elimination and prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities and vulnerable groups, especially in view of the increase in racial discrimination and discrimination against minorities in one group of countries. The activities should be more clearly described in the budget proposals.

23. The advisory services for operational activities described in paragraph 5 (a) of section 21.25 applied to only one area of human rights. The

(Mrs. Goicochea, Cuba)

Secretariat should submit proposals concerning economic, social and cultural rights. With regard to activity 1 (Parliamentary services) in paragraph 21.26, the reports to the General Assembly on the new international humanitarian order should be transferred to section 23 because resolution 47/106, which provided the mandate for the activity, had been adopted under item 96 on refugee questions. With regard to the specialized outside expertise referred to in paragraph 21.28, use should be made of the Subcommission's own experts.

24. Cuba supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee concerning section 22A and was in general agreement with the recommendations concerning section 23. However, it was puzzled by the fact that the missions referred to in paragraph 23.9 (c) concerned mainly North America. Why should there be regional selectivity in such activities? The Secretariat should also explain what it understood by the concept of humanitarian diplomacy and indicate the resolutions which provided the mandate for the activities mentioned in paragraph 23.18.

25. Cuba refused on procedural grounds to approve any resources for the activities connected with the removal, control and banning of mines described in paragraph 23.19. The relevant resolution had been adopted only at the current session of the General Assembly, so that the budget proposals must have been drawn up before a mandate existed. The activities should be financed in accordance with the procedure for use of the contingency fund.

26. Mr. GRANT (United States of America) said that his delegation believed that the growth of the United Nations regular budget should be kept in check, and therefore, often agreed with the recommendations of ACABQ. However, since the United Nations currently must set priorities and redeploy resources, it could not agree with ACABQ recommendations concerning section 23. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be strengthened, and the four Professional posts recommended for elimination in paragraph VI.11 of the ACABQ report should be retained. With regard to section 21, his delegation strongly supported the Secretary-General's proposed budget increase, for activities relating to human rights, an area which was clearly deserving of more resources.

27. Mr. JADMANI (Pakistan) said that the Secretary-General required adequate resources in order to carry out mandated activities under part VI of the programme budget, to which his delegation attached great importance. ACABQ had been unable to make any recommendations on section 21 and considered those activities to be provisional. His delegation hoped that the Secretariat would be able to justify appropriately the resources required.

28. With regard to section 22A, the proposed staffing of chiefs of missions for the designated least developed countries should be charged to the regular budget.

29. Turning to section 23, his delegation underscored the need for adequate resources for the newly established Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Given the unprecedented growth in the number and magnitude of humanitarian

(Mr. Jadmani, Pakistan)

emergencies, a reduction in staffing could affect its operations and undermine efforts to streamline procedures and make the Department more responsive to those needs.

30. Mr. APTSIAURI (Georgia) said that his delegation supported the proposed financing of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Humanitarian activities had taken on increasing importance in the new political and economic situation, when newly independent States such as his own faced many problems. Furthermore, in his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General had stated that he considered humanitarian affairs one of the most important fields of United Nations activity. His delegation welcomed the draft resolution on the improvement of the monitoring and coordination of humanitarian assistance operations and joined its sponsors. Such problems could not be solved without the necessary number of experienced staff. His delegation suggested that the section on the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be adopted without any change.

31. Mr. JU Kuilin (China) said that, with regard to section 21 of the programme budget, his delegation agreed with the views already expressed by Egypt, Uganda and Cuba. Political, development and humanitarian issues should be treated equally, especially as far as resources were concerned.

32. With regard to the staffing of the Centre for Human Rights, equitable geographical distribution should be taken into account, with particular attention being given to recruitment from developing countries. His delegation also requested clarification of the provisional estimates referred to in paragraph VI.2 of the report of ACABQ (A/48/7).

33. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), responding to questions regarding section 21, said that the Secretariat was developing new methodology for the treatment of resources for perennial activities. Section 21 had included provisional activities which had a legislative mandate or which would be approved eventually, in accordance with a system developed and approved by the General Assembly. For example, decisions of the Commission on Human Rights that were to be endorsed by the Economic and Social Council were reflected. The Secretary-General had also included activities pending decisions of Main Committees of the General Assembly. In the case of a major event such as the World Conference on Human Rights, the Secretariat had prepared a statement of programme budget implications that would come before the Committee.

34. The distribution of resources among subprogrammes was based on a well-defined justification and did not represent a "top-down" approach. Some subprogrammes, such as advisory services, relied more heavily than others on extrabudgetary resources. Subprogramme 2, for instance, had the highest percentage of extrabudgetary funding. He regretted that, owing to a technical error, paragraph 21.9 of the proposed programme budget contained no mention of the Working Group on the Right to Development, which would be included in the final version.

(Mr. Takasu)

35. Fact-finding services referred to assistance provided to Special Rapporteurs and working groups of the Commission on Human Rights, as endorsed by the Economic and Social Council. The Secretary-General could not appoint a Special Rapporteur or establish a working group without the approval of the Member State concerned, and advisory services could be provided only at the request of a Government. The list of such services was indicative and not exhaustive. It should be noted that the Committee for Programme and Coordination had recommended approval of section 21 of the proposed programme budget in paragraph 185 of its report (A/48/16, part II).

36. With regard to section 23, the Advisory Committee's recommendation would eliminate a number of posts requested by the Secretary-General. One of the posts, that of the chief of the External Relations and Information Unit (at the D-1 level), was crucial to the effective flow of information and had been redeployed during the current biennium. Two P-2 posts were at Headquarters, one in that Unit and the other in the Policy Planning and Evaluation Unit. Those posts had been redeployed and were encumbered. Another D-1 post affected by the ACABQ recommendation was that of the chief of the Complex Emergencies Branch at Geneva, which performed a vital function. The legislative mandate for humanitarian diplomacy was to be found in a number of General Assembly resolutions.

37. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), replying to the question asked by the representative of China, said that, in his introductory statement, he had indicated that table I in the first report of the Advisory Committee (A/48/7) contained provisional deletions. Where it was obvious to the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General's proposals were not firmly based on a legislative mandate, it had recommended a provisional deletion. For example, it had recommended the provisional deletion of $3.6 million for integrated offices pending a decision by the Second Committee. Table II contained provisional inclusions in areas that would be affected by reports of the Secretary-General. For example, a provisional inclusion had been made for the Department for Development Support and Management Services pending the decision on further reports of the Secretary-General on the integration of the Office for Project Services into that Department.

38. With regard to the statement by the delegation of Canada on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, where ACABQ had felt that it was not in a position to recommend the proposed transfer from budgetary to extrabudgetary resources, according to the present arrangement between the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General, all regular budget posts were at UNHCR headquarters and were for functions such as coordination, management, supervision and policy guidance. If UNHCR wished additional regular budget posts at Headquarters to perform operational and support functions, there was nothing to prevent it from making such a request and justifying it. The Advisory Committee, however, had not felt that there was sufficient justification to warrant change in the existing arrangement.

39. Mrs. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) thanked the Controller for his replies and said that her delegation would comment further on the methodology used in connection with perennial activities during the negotiations on the relevant resolutions. The extrabudgetary resources allocated to subprogramme 2 under section 21 (44.3 per cent) seemed inordinately high compared to those allocated to subprogramme 1.

40. Her delegation was pleased that the omission of the Working Group on the Right to Development had been a mere oversight. It was unfortunate that one of the resolutions before the Committee contained a reference to "humanitarian diplomacy" without defining the concept. Consideration had to be given to the potential budgetary implications of such vague references. Her delegation reserved the right to comment on the Controller's other remarks in informal consultations, where it hoped to receive a response to its questions concerning posts and the possible redistribution of resources in certain subprogrammes.

41. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) reassured the Cuban representative that the term "humanitarian diplomacy" had been deleted from the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 adopted by the General Assembly.

42. The CHAIRMAN said that, in view of the comments made during the debate, he proposed that the Committee should suspend consideration of the sections falling under part VI and revert to them after the Committee had concluded informal consultations on the relevant issues. Likewise, decisions on the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) (A/48/16 (Part II)) regarding part VI would be taken at a later stage.

43. It was so decided.

Part VII. Public information

Part VIII. Common support services

44. The CHAIRMAN said that total estimates proposed by the Secretary-General for part VII amounted to $135,789,100 and for part VIII, $927,013,500. The Advisory Committee had recommended appropriations totalling $131,050,100 for part VII and $898,151,900 for part VIII.

45. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the increase in the resources of the Department of Public Information for the biennium 1994-1995 reflected the transfer of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and certain publication functions to the Department. In fact, there had been negative real growth in the Department's traditional activities, even with the provision of nearly $2.2 million to service information activities for major United Nations conferences. The Department's staff costs of $101 million, or 75 per cent of the estimate, reflected its labour-intensive nature. Its general operating expenses, which were largely non-discretionary, reflected a reduction of 20 staff members. Specific reductions under general operating expenses would have a serious infrastructural and programmatic impact on the Department. The performance report for the current biennium showed $3 million in additional

(Mr. Takasu)

operating requirements over the approved appropriations. The Advisory Committee recommended a total reduction in the Department's budget without taking into account the technical adjustment of $2.7 million for turnover recosting. The most significant reduction under general operating expenses and general temporary assistance ($1.1 million) was proposed under contractual services on the ground that a greater proportion of information materials should be translated and printed internally. However, the excess capacity of the Office of Conference Services in that area was limited and did not always coincide with the printing and distribution schedules of the Department of Public Information. Delays in the internal printing of time-sensitive materials could be damaging.

46. As the Secretary-General had stated, the Department of Administration and Management would play a crucial role in 1994 in the areas of financial control, human resources management, conference services and the efficient operation of the General Services. The human resources management programme, whose key component was training, was of particular importance. The Secretariat was keenly aware of the Advisory Committee's observations concerning the training programme, including training activities in the peace-keeping operations, which had already received contributions from Member States or from the Support Account for Peace-keeping Operations. The training programme emphasized the training or retraining of staff in new skills and the upgrading of existing skills, particularly in the areas of management, supervision and computer applications.

47. The Secretariat's proposals on training also took into account the introduction of new technology, staff turnover, mobility and the assignment of staff between duty stations and departments. He expressed appreciation to the Advisory Committee for supporting the Secretary-General's view that training was a top priority in facilitating the process of change in the Organization. In that connection, under section 27, the Secretary-General had included approximately $5 million to cover the cost of agreed separation of staff. The placement of staff members following the restructuring would be a problem. The decline in extrabudgetary resources available in the economic and social sectors would inevitably have an impact on the regular budget as a result of agreed separations.

48. Under section 25E, the Secretary-General had proposed abolishing 19 of 23 translation and editorial posts which had been redeployed outside the Office of Conference Services during the biennium 1992-1993 (para. 25E.9). The Advisory Committee had recommended that those posts should be re-established without increasing the staffing table. The Secretariat did not really believe that the Advisory Committee's recommendation was the most cost-effective solution. The Office of Conference Services had operated without those posts throughout the current biennium and it was anticipated that the acquisition of computers in the biennium 1994-1995 as part of the technological innovations programme would further boost productivity. The Secretary-General's views were borne out by the productivity statistics given in paragraph 25E.20 of the proposed programme budget.

(Mr. Takasu)

49. An across-the-budget review of priorities had led to the proposal to eliminate a total of 78 Professional and high-level posts, offset in large measure by the proposed increase of such posts in higher-priority areas. Further redeployment of Professional posts would have an adverse impact on the implementation of other programmes.

50. Concerning telecommunications, he said that the one-time investment in the proposed United Nations satellite network would be more than offset by significant, tangible savings and its effectiveness in ensuring the safety of staff members. The Secretariat had submitted a report on the matter to the Advisory Committee in early 1993 and an update in October 1993, which the Advisory Committee had been unable to review. Consequently, it had recommended a provisional revision. Postponing the implementation of such a vital project would not only increase the current commercial telecommunications costs paid by the Organization but would also jeopardize the security of staff away from Headquarters. A provisional appropriation - subject to the Committee's review of the Secretary-General's report in early 1994 - would be far preferable to a provisional revision.

51. Mr. STÖCKL (Rapporteur of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) presented the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on part VII of the proposed programme budget. In particular, he drew attention to paragraphs 49 and paragraphs 207 to 222 of the report of CPC (A/48/16 (Part II)). Paragraph 49, although it was included under the comments on section 1 of the proposed programme budget, was relevant to the Department of Public Information and referred to preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. He read out paragraphs 219 to 222. During the discussion of the proposed programme budget, many delegations had pointed to the need for a more effective evaluation of the work of the Department of Public Information.

52. Mr. MADDENS (Belgium), speaking of behalf of the European Union, expressed the Union's astonishment at the proposals concerning the Department of Public Information. There had been no in-depth review of the Department's management methods during the current budgetary exercise. Surely, some posts in the overstaffed Department could be redeployed to other activities. As the Union had already stated in the Fourth Committee debate on the report of the Committee on Information, the Department's resources could be utilized more effectively and with greater flexibility, particularly if the demand for certain publications was correctly assessed. The proliferation of publications gave cause for concern; the policy on publications should be reviewed. The European Union supported the recommendation contained in paragraph I.10 of the report of the Advisory Committee on the allocation of resources for preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

53. It was disappointing that the Department of Administration and Management, the largest department of the United Nations, was having difficulty in rationalizing its structures. The Union supported the recommendation of CPC, which questioned the programmatic justification for increasing the resources allocated to the Department. Those funds could easily be redeployed to the priority sectors identified in the budget outline. In that respect, the Union

(Mr. Maddens, Belgium)

also agreed with the CPC recommendations. The proposal to establish an additional level of management at the assistant secretary-general level between the Under-Secretary-General of the Department and the chiefs of its four departments did not seem to be in keeping with General Assembly resolution 47/212.

54. Like the Advisory Committee, the Union was not convinced of the wisdom of abolishing 19 posts in the translation and editorial services. In view of the significant growth in the workload of those services, it supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation to restore the posts without increasing the staffing table. The introduction of new technologies would be useful, but, in the short term, would not result in savings.

55. Lastly, the Union supported the statement by the Advisory Committee contained in paragraph VIII.16 of its report concerning the Purchase and Transportation Service, including its concern about understaffing with regard to both the total number of posts and managerial posts in the Service. The General Assembly should implement the Advisory Committee's recommendation on strengthening the Service's management and control capacity through the redeployment of resources.

56. Mr. WOLFFHECHEL (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries - Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark - said that, in view of the large budget proposed for the Department of Public Information, the Nordic countries welcomed the restructuring of the Department and stressed the need for transparency in its activities and its budgetary requirements. They expected that restructuring would lead to greater flexibility and that changing conditions (for example, in South Africa or the Middle East) would be reflected in the Department's spending pattern. Redundant activities in publishing and other areas should be discontinued.

57. The Department's staff costs were considerable despite the proposed reductions. In the belief that savings could be realized across the board on other items under section 24, including contractual services, the Nordic countries supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee in that regard.

58. The Nordic countries also agreed with the Advisory Committee's suggestions to reduce general operating expenses on hospitality functions, furniture and equipment, and supplies and materials. The United Nations information centres should be able to meet local needs and demands for information about the United Nations system. The Nordic countries favoured a regional approach but also looked forward to the findings of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) on the role of the National Officer category throughout the United Nations common system.

59. Mr. ESKRIGGE (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Canada and Australia, said that the level of resources allocated for public information activities was no longer supportable when the United Nations had to address serious issues of human rights, humanitarian assistance, peacemaking and

(Mr. Eskrigge, New Zealand)

peace-keeping, and international economic and social cooperation. Even though the Department of Public Information was provided with $136 million and over 800 posts, representing 5 per cent of the entire budget and 8 per cent of all posts, more than was devoted to human rights and humanitarian affairs combined, it was a marginal player in terms of how public perceptions of the United Nations were shaped.

60. The recent streamlining of the Department seemed to have had little practical effect. The Organization needed a public information service that focused on high profile issues having some immediacy, a service that dealt with the international media, where DPI had limited impact. Further streamlining would allow resources to be released to the priority areas identified by the Secretary-General.

61. Common support services absorbed one third of budget funding and over one third of posts. The Organization had failed to reduce the overall number of staff in that area despite significant expenditure on modern technology. In the Office of Conference Services changes in translation practices could lead to a reduction in typing posts, and his delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal to abolish the 19 posts referred to by the Advisory Committee in paragraph VIII.22 of its report.

62. He noted with concern the proposal to assign two Assistant Secretaries-General to the Department of Administration and Management while retaining the Under-Secretary-General post and four Director posts. He would appreciate an explanation of the added layer of management which that represented. In view of the reduced responsibilities of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, there seemed to be scope for a reduction in the number of posts assigned to it.

63. Mr. SERME (Burkina Faso) said that his delegation supported the proposal to convert 40 local level posts at United Nations information centres to the National Officer level. Further, he requested a detailed list of information centres and a breakdown of posts and resources by centre.

64. Mr. CHUINKAM (Cameroon) said that information centres played an important role in a changing world, particularly in developing countries, where there was a need to justify contributions to the United Nations budget. He was surprised that the Secretary-General had proposed the abolition of certain posts at information centres, which, rather, needed additional resources. He welcomed the views of the Advisory Committee on the Department of Administration and Management, and agreed that the increase proposed for that department was not justified.

65. Mr. NDOBOLI (Uganda) said that his delegation supported an increase in resources for DPI. The budget proposals for DPI did not reflect real growth, the apparent growth relating in fact to the transfer to DPI of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the holding of conferences.

(Mr. Ndoboli, Uganda)

66. Information centres played an important role in creating awareness, and in that connection he supported the conversion of 40 local level posts to the National Officer level.

67. The distribution of resources among budget sections was not balanced, since a few sections had absorbed the largest share of resources, while OCS and DPI suffered. For example, contractual translation and printing services should be used only for overload, and steps should be taken to strengthen in-house capacity in those areas. His delegation had not agreed with the downgrading of the Department of Conference Services. He fully supported the Advisory Committee regarding the restoration of 19 posts in OCS.

68. Ms. SAEKI (Japan) said that it was important to ensure that there was no duplication between the information activities of DPI and those of individual departments. She asked what the budgetary impact had been of the transfer to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the Office of the Spokesman. Increases in the area of common support costs should be minimized and resources allocated to other areas. Adequate resources should, however, be allocated for training, since that would improve efficiency and effectiveness. Proper attention must be paid to security and to the introduction of new technology, including in the communications sector. Lastly, regarding conference services, consideration should be given to the most efficient mix of regular budget posts and temporary assistance.

69. Mrs. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that the scope of section 25 was such that the Secretary-General must be required to seek the concurrence of the Advisory Committee before transferring resources between subsections.

70. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the United Nations had always taken a unified approach to information services and had established a department to deal exclusively with information activities rather than having individual departments conduct their own information programmes. Regarding the level of resources allocated to DPI compared with humanitarian affairs and peace-keeping operations, the figures were somewhat misleading in that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations had core staffs funded under the regular budget, with the majority of staff being funded from other resources. The resources for DPI were all included in the regular budget. Of the posts indicated in the proposed programme budget, the Committee would note that some 180 related to activities transferred to DPI, including the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. In any event the Secretary-General was proposing some reductions in the area of public information, and would continue to keep the activity under review.

71. Regarding the Department of Administration and Management, it had been decided to establish a structure headed by an Under-Secretary-General, supported by two Assistant Secretaries-General, in view of the great responsibilities of that department. The large number of posts in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management reflected the scope of the Department's activities, and, in fact, included posts relating to the administration of justice as well as to the Management Advisory Service. The

(Mr. Takasu)

latter would be transferred to the Office for Inspections and Investigations. The direct support staff for the Under-Secretary-General numbered only six Professionals and five General Service, representing the minimum necessary.

72. With respect to conference services, the Secretary-General had compensated for a number of vacancies in translation through the use of temporary assistance. He was now proposing to regularize the situation through the abolition of 19 posts and the continued use of temporary assistance. The Advisory Committee's recommendation that the posts should be re-established without increasing the staffing table would simply cause anomalies.

73. United Nations information centres played an important role, and the Secretary-General had taken steps to improve their efficiency by combining their functions with those of UNDP offices. As a result certain reductions had been proposed.

74. Concerning the comment that general operating expenditures within DPI were too high, particularly for hospitality, he noted that the total amount involved was only $67,900, including some $20,000 for a training programme and similar activities and some $47,000 for the Office of the Spokesman.

75. Commenting on security, he noted that guided tours had been resumed at Headquarters since the beginning of December. The Secretary-General had requested $3.1 million in temporary assistance for security purposes at Headquarters in view of recent terrorist threats. The Advisory Committee had approved the addition of 28 temporary security staff, the cost being covered from vacancies. Given the continued risk of terrorist attack, it was expected that that arrangement would need to be continued in the forthcoming biennium.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.